

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON FAITH  
HOW DOES BUDDHISM VIEW DOUBT?  
BY TED MORINO, SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT SENIOR ADVISOR**

**Q: From the faith perspective, how should we view doubt in our Buddhist practice?**

A: In Buddhism, doubt is defined as one of the five poisons of life (the other four are greed, anger, foolishness and arrogance).

It is well known that we strive to establish doubt-free faith in our Buddhist practice. But it's important to understand that in Buddhism, doubt-free faith does not mean blind, unquestioning faith.

Doubt-free faith is a life-condition in which we are totally secure and comfortable in our belief. It is not a static state, of course. Within our security, we continue to strive to deepen our understanding of Buddhism and strengthen our faith — our state of life.

Yet new doubts can always arise. But it's also possible that our enlightened nature can always win over new doubts to the point that our faith becomes absolute conviction in the Law, as exemplified, for instance, by Nichiren Daishonin.

When believers asked Nichiren Daishonin questions about various principles of Buddhism, the Daishonin would always first praise their seeking mind. He appreciated the opportunity each question afforded for him to clarify an essential aspect of his teaching. Without questions, there could be no answers.

That said, I want to share the three points that T'ien-t'ai cites in Chapter 6 of *Great Concentration and Insight* as obstacles that hinder our Buddhist practice. They are: 1) doubting oneself, 2) doubting one's mentor and 3) doubting the Law.

Self-doubt is the worst kind of doubt. Regarding self-doubt, T'ien-t'ai states, "Doubting yourself means you despise yourself, thinking you are unworthy and unable to carry out the Buddhist practice." Thus, he points out how self-doubt can prevent us from obtaining benefit and can even lead to us giving up on our Buddhist practice.

Sadly, we live in a very skeptical age, in which people easily doubt everything, including themselves. Many people have no confidence in politics, education, the media, religion or even the human race. This "no confidence list" goes on and on. However, at the top of this list is self-doubt.

We see here a vicious cycle: Self-doubt adversely affects our ego and sense of self worth, which ultimately degrades society even more. One of the great goals of Buddhism is to wipe out this disbelief in oneself from the surface of the earth and help each individual establish true self-confidence.

President Ikeda once stated to the effect that "Because it's not easy to trust ourselves, we put trust in the Gohonzon, thereby making our faith in the Law the basis of our confidence in "our inherent Buddhahood — ourselves". And here we see another vicious cycle that if we are the type of people who cannot trust ourselves, it follows that we cannot trust our mentor or the Law wholeheartedly. But this is the very reason why we are encouraged to practice and study Buddhism spontaneously for our own human revolution. Buddhist practice, together with good friends in Buddhist practice, is a great tool that helps us turn our lack of confidence into conviction. It is everybody's challenge to grow strong in faith using every possible means to do so. Buddhism guides us to deal with weakness in every aspect of our lives.

Buddhism teaches us that we can trust the beauty and potential of our lives. Nichiren

Title: How Does Buddhism View Doubt?

Subject: World Tribune 06/25/99 n.3248 p.6 WT990625p06

Author: Ted Morino

Keywords: Answers Does Doubt Encouragement Faith Guidance Morino Questions Tribune View World

Daishonin showed us how to penetrate our shallow selves and awaken to the greater self we each really are, the self that penetrates the deepest realm within us — our Buddhahood, the ninth consciousness.

“I used to always do my own thing. But now, I can pray for the happiness of others.” Or “I have hope for the future.” Or “I will do it instead of just worrying about it or wishing for it.” We often hear such statements at SGI-USA discussion meetings. Such words where altruistic self-identity or strong determination for the future is established are actual proof of the self-confidence gained through this practice.

The following are tips that can be gleaned from the principle of the nine consciousnesses for all of us to increase our self-confidence and develop a stronger Buddhist practice.

First, we should simply make the conscious effort to chant with a sense of trust in the Gohonzon. Then, we have to exert 100 percent effort in dealing with the challenges of our daily lives. This prayer-and-action combination will enable us to win over each small issue, day by day, and gain self-assurance.

Second, as we continue to make such conscious efforts, they will gradually become part of our make-up, meaning that we will start trusting ourselves subconsciously (seventh consciousness).

Third, as we further continue this process, to trust ourselves will become our tendency, which is called karma (eighth consciousness) in Buddhism.

Fourth, Buddhism teaches that, as we continue to practice Buddhism with such positive feelings in our hearts and thoughts in our minds, our joy and self-confidence will gush forth to the point where we can truly enjoy living, where we can experience the joy of the Law. This is the proof that we have strengthened or manifested our Buddhahood (ninth consciousness). In this life-condition, our self-confidence is unshakable. Doubt has become a stranger.

SGI President Ikeda states: “Those with a seeking mind will always feel refreshed, hopeful and filled with joy. We must realize that only through a seeking spirit can we polish and deepen our faith. This is true not only in the realm of faith. In any field of endeavor, everything is determined by one’s seeking mind.”

The first step to overcome doubt is clear in Buddhism: It starts with arousing our seeking spirit.

**WT**